◼ News You Can Use

by Haidee Allerton

THE LITTLE BLUE BOOK

CHANGE INITIATIVES often fail because employees aren't ready to accept or implement them. So, as a little preventive maintenance, Levi Strauss gave its employees a "little blue book," as it's known, to prepare them for the rollout of a new supply chain of products.

The handbook, *Individual Readiness for a Changing Environment*, is an informal, 145-page binder with assorted self-assessment tools and self-improvement resources.

But Levi's didn't distribute the books; employees had to request them.

"The little blue book sent a clear message," says a member of the Individual Readiness Team. "People understand that they're responsible for their own careers and their paths through Levi's."

More than 4,000 workers have asked for the handbook, and Levi has had to keep producing copies to keep up with the demand.
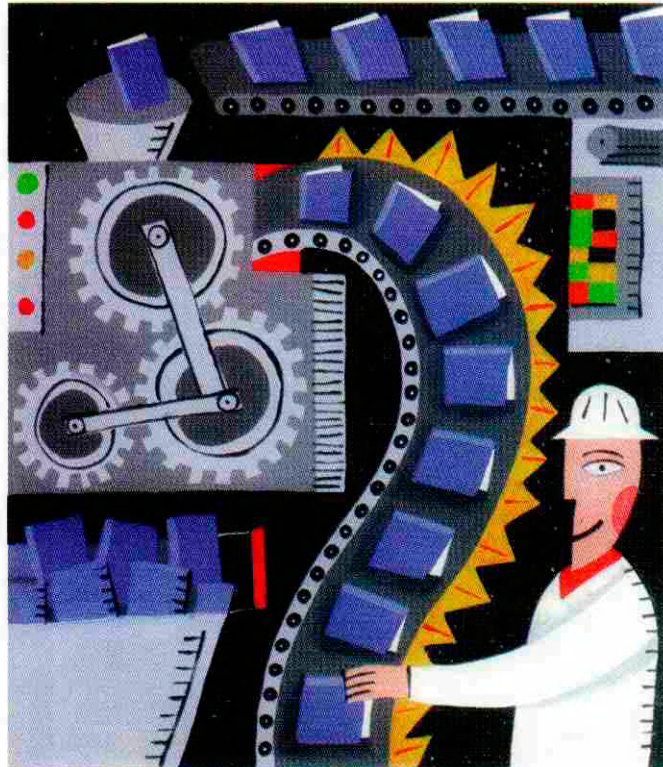
CREATING WITHIN CHANGE

"IT'S DIFFICULT to be creative in a changing environment," says Morgan D. Jones, a former CIA instructor and author of *The Thinker's Toolkit* (Times Business, 1995). "Change is when creativity is needed most," says Jones.

Here are some tips from Jones's workshops on keeping creativity alive during change.

▶ **Restate a problem many ways, in writing.** That will clarify the problem.

▶ **Practice divergent thinking.** Identify the problem, brainstorm ideas, and then cluster and select the most promising ones.

▶ **Develop lists of pros, cons, and fixes.** Consider pros first; cons are much easier to come up with. After identifying cons, generate potential fixes.

QUICK TIPS

IF YOU HAVEN'T been successful in obtaining management support for your recommendations, try these techniques from *Perceptions & Realities*, a newsletter published by Karten Associates in Randolph, Massachusetts.

▶ **Consider management's perspective**. You can't spark management's enthusiasm if your proposal offers it no clear benefit.

▶ **Review organizational goals.** Learn about the factors and forces driving the organization—including the opportunities and threats, and the issues of concern to stakeholders.

▶ **Be persistent**. Don't expect an immediate thumbs-up. If you don't get the go-ahead, do some fine-tuning and try again.

▶ **Know what kind of support you want**. If you can't articulate exactly what you seek, don't blame management for not providing it.

NOT GOOFY

WALT DISNEY World has introduced "The Disney Approach to HR Management."

The new seminar is a collaboration between Disney University Professional Development Programs and the Society for Human Resource Management in Alexandria, Virginia.

The seminar explores the "Disney Difference" in employee recruitment, selection, orientation, and training, as well as communication and people management.

Seminar participants view the "Disney Difference."

MORE QUICK TIPS

HUMOR CAN add an important dimension to professional communication. So says Marilyn S. Nyman, president and founder of Nyman Associates in

Horsham, Pennsylvania. But, Nyman cautions, it's essential to maintain decorum and political correctness.

Nyman offers these guidelines:

▶ **Keep humor believable**. True stories tend to be the funniest and most ironic.

▶ **Don't use a square peg**. If you can't make a smooth transition from your story or joke to your speech, find a new story. The punch line should relate to the topic or audience.

▶ **Give it a "G" rating**. Think: Has the joke been approved for all audiences?

THE TEAM ACT

BY NOW, the TEAM Act (Teamwork for Employees and Management) will likely have been passed by the Senate.

The act will enable employees to resolve workplace problems and take advantage of opportunities through team-based employee involvement while preserving the prohibition against "sham"

employer-run unions.

Under the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, it's illegal for teams of employees in nonunion settings to work together to address issues considered to be "terms and conditions of employment"—such as, the length of the workday and lunch breaks, and paid holidays and vacations. The NLRA was effective in eliminating employer-run sham unions by the 1950s.

The TEAM Act amends a section of the NLRA to permit union and nonunion employees to share decision-making responsibilities with management.

The act, in effect, gives all employees the right to be heard and endorses teams.

TEMP MANAGEMENT

MANAGING a temporary workforce can be difficult, according to a 12-year study conducted by Hagberg Consulting Group, a leadership development firm based in San Mateo, California.

"Motivating someone who won't be around next year takes the skills of best leaders," says Hagberg se-

nior consultant Ellen Shuck. Such skills include being able to make the organization's vision or tasks simple, keeping everyone informed, and showing that a team's interest is ahead of members' individual interests.

Shuck says that leaders must take steps to explain clearly the vision or goals, communicate enthusiasm to employees, and demonstrate that team goals are worthy to be put ahead of personal goals.

SCHOOL-TO-WORK

MICROSOFT has instituted the Microsoft Authorized Academic Training Program in selected schools to teach students about computer networks and Windows NT operating system.

The aim is to get high-school students in particular on track for careers in technology. The program teaches real-world skills so students can qualify for technical-support-and-development jobs when they graduate.

Currently, 139 U.S. and Canadian schools, colleges, and universities are participating in the program.

PERSPECTIVE ON PARTNERSHIPS

THE MOST significant indicator of whether an organization will be successful in a partnership is the organization's internal success with teams, according to a survey conducted by Tompkins Associates, based in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In *The Genesis Enterprise: Creating Peak-to-Peak Performance*, Jim Tompkins, president of Tompkins Associates, describes partnerships as "teaming in the gap between organizations."

The second most important indicator is how successful an organization views itself. The survey also found that the longer a company has pursued teaming, the greater the likelihood that it will pursue partnerships.

Sources include Development Dimensions International and Spotlight on Performance.

Send press releases or short articles on news, trends, and best practices to **News You Can Use,** Training & Development, *1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. E-mail NYCU@astd.org.*

Trend Watch

▶ One in 10 U.S. businesses has an employee who has been diagnosed HIV-positive, according to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. CDC offers a management kit for dealing with AIDS in the workplace.

▶ Layoffs are out; hiring is back, reports the *New York Times*. Instead, the trend is toward creating new markets to redeploy employees. "Downsizing" has been supplanted by the new buzzwords, "grow the revenue line."

▶ More than 90 percent of businesses use temporary staff, and temp services put more than two million to work every day—three times the amount of 10 years ago, according to the National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services.